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Ecclesiastical Reconciliation;

H U M B L Y  
Offered to the Consideration of all  
Peaceable and Good Christians.

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*By a Lover of Peace.*

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L O N D O N,  
Printed *Anno Domini*, 1685.

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# Eccelesiastical Reconciliation

Offered to the Corporation of the  
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# AN ESSAY

Conducing to

## Eccleasial Reconciliation.

**T**hat the World does too much abound with Men, who (to their different perswasions in points of Religion,) have not only Annex'd their particular Interest and Animositities, but hold themselves likewise more than needfully obliged to continue their Discord on their own Terms or Truths not more known than deplor'd by the Conscientious, and Wise that have penetrated into their evil Effects, both on the Eccleasial and Civil Account.

And if these Consequences be evidently, such as no reasonable Man can in Fact deny: Is it not wonder enough, that Men should be rather opposers by a continu'd asserting of Notions that must make Controversies endless, then Promoters of Union by Amicable and Reasonable Methods of Reconciliation: When none of them will deny that the Latter would not be a far more Divine Employment of their Abilities than the Former.

But *Roman Catholics*, and *Protestants*, (however they desire to be accounted Charitable, either as Men or Christians,)

stians,) have too frequently taken far different measures; Nay such as have farther manifested their strenuous Endeavours to continue their divided Doctrines, then to Dispute themselves into a moderate accommodation. And this not a little appears to be the *Genius*, If not Boast, of their Polemick Disputants, who have either thinn'd, or wire-drawn their dissensions to their utmost Litigious Extent, however they appear less modest or solid thereby; Or to render them worse, have Represented them by more ugly Figures then were either proper or needful. As if their Controversies in Religion could not be manag'd securely without the help of some more than ordinary Bugs, to fright others.

And this they have done, tho' little to the advantage of their Reputations, how plentifully soever they have powr'd their Wit and Talents of Literature, into Volumes swell'd more then ordinary to this purpose.

The sight of whose numerous Titles, (without further Inspection into their Bulks,) are certainly enough to Anticipate a Loathing of their perusal by any Reasonable Man, who would be glad to be significantly instructed in a lesser compass: Or what had been better then all, to have been gentler inform'd from such Mens Abilities, how Christian Peace and Reconciliation might redound from their Endeavours, together with what Proposals they would tender in order to a Charitable, and sufficient accommodating of Points in difference. But these Men, that have labour'd by their handling of controverted opinions to induce a Concession from others, that the Polemicks of Religion ought to be endless, or that their successful passage to a Christian accommodation, is not easier to be found than the North-west Voyage to the *Indies*, must certainly acknowledge how nice or Refractory their Assertions are of this kind; If but for undervaluing of their own and  
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other Mens Ingenuities, or what the World might have Reason to expect from their Performances.

Considering, that such Persons, who have all along sharpen'd disputes amongst Christians, have not given sufficient leisure to themselves, or others, to consider duly why they ought not rather to unite and agree upon fitting Terms, than to Litigate farther what they have not been able in the compass of more than an Age to decide.

And this I think ought Reasonably to be expected from them, both on the part of *Roman Catholicks* and *Protestants*, who cannot doubt but such as have written more than enough to extend Disputations, should be of all men best able to tender things fit for Christian Reconcilement: Unless they will acknowledge that they are more accurate in maintaining of Dissentions, than in arguing or persuading men to be quiet.

The first Entailers of Controversy, betwixt *Roman Catholicks* and the Church of *England*, how far soever they intended their Disputes should improve by descent, would find, (were they now alive,) that their present adherents have been able to add so little to their Structures of Separation, by way of Argument, that this grand Controversy betwixt *Rome* and *England* seems by degrees to have run it self out of breath. And tho' some heated Preachers, have as yet Lungs strong enough to vent their Pulpit-animosities, It is certain, that they are neither able to talk, or pen other matter than what has over and over been handled before. Inasmuch, that Posterity can receive nothing from the Pulpit or Press, other than the scraps of precedent Controversy, anew-cook'd, or plausibly varied, to gratifie some present Pallats. But if they are at a stand, or *non-plus*, on that account at this day, would it not well become such Sticklers, (if not the Endeavours of the more moderately Learn'd and Pious,) to spend some Portion

tion of their Studies in Methodising a Christian Accord. There being little Reason to doubt that a small Healing-Season, well Employ'd, would not produce more Christian Union and Felicity, than a far longer past-time has been able to Violate.

And since it does plainly appear, that the Decision of this Contröversie is like a Weight that will not be pull'd to either side by force of Argument; what then does so naturally Emerge from *Roman Catholics* and Church of *England-Protestants*, as by their Reciprocal Consents, to accommodate their Differences.

And whosoever Affirms that they cannot Reconcile or Agree on what is sufficient for their Publick Worship and Devotion, must fondly censure that there are fewer Wise and Good Christians, then would be found if this task with Religious and safe Freedom were committed to their Undertakings.

In the mean time, I cannot but Instance, that as the Schools, on all sides, have great Reason to cease their fiery Expectations of overthrowing their Adversaries by their Pens; so must it likewise be granted, that neither the power of the Sword, nor the most Rigid Execution of Laws, will ever compass a full Conviction of Opposers, or reduce their Conscientious Submission to the Establishment of adverse Tenents in Worship. And this is so well known from the Many Wars, Massacres, Executions, and Bloody Contrivances, both at Home and Abroad, as they need not be here repeated, otherwise than to let the Bigots of opposition, discern (from such Rigid and Sanguinary presidents,) how Ineffectually their Animosities have hitherto been managed: As also how Disobliging and Pernicious they have been heightend, to the Disuniting of their Subjection, both Ecclesiastical and Civil. Insomuch, that the Supream Magistrates have been highly pre-



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 prejuduc'd, whensoever such Zealous Antagonists have had any prevalent Interest in their Nation.

On the contrary, it is very Evident, that had Men of these averse and inflam'd Denominations abated seasonably the Rigidness of their Expectations and Tenents, and had accordingly Influenc'd the Gracious Inclination of Princes and Magistrates, they could not have mis'd, with far less trouble to themselves, and others; The producing of a convenient Reconciliation, whereby their King and Country might have been at once oblig'd to their Endeavours.

But it is enough manifest, that the obstructing of so Pious and so Glorious an Undertaking, has least proceeded from the Averseness of any Sovereign Ruler, because in prudence it could not be such, either in a Prince judicious of himself, or that is influenc'd, as he ought by a Conscientious and Discerning Ministry. Or not from such, who have improv'd their times and opportunities to enveterate Men under the names of Superstitions, or Idolaters on one hand, and Schismaticks and Hereticks on the other. And that they have occasionally done so, (for ends perhaps none of the best,) is very palpable, in respect they have so little made it a case of Conscience to do otherwise. And thus from the time of Divisions in Religion that began in *Henry* the VIII. dayes, there has not been published to the World any remarkable Expedients whereby their Fellow-Subjects may be convinc'd that a Reconciliation is necessary in Doctrine and Worship.

If any man ask how this may be effected, or least he Judge, that proposals of this Nature, seem rather Plausible than Possible: I conceive it were enough Briefly to inform such an enquirer that there must be a due and discreet Remission of the Rigour and Extremities of some Points, where they touch too hard, that are most Essentially Controverted.

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If this had not been omitted by Men that have either writ or discuss'd in behalf of either Perswasion, they would not have still Endeavour'd, that all, either Taught, or practis'd by either Church should be fully received by force of Disputation. Whilst they have never urged, but rather totally declin'd the proposing of what might be held sufficiently enough, provided all Men would accord on those Terms.

Perhaps a *Roman Catholick* may here reply, that his Church has put an end to this Discussion, or what may be tender'd on the account of accommodation by any Church divided from Her, by saying that the *Roman* Church has already determin'd her Proposals to be Infallible, and consequently to be so receiv'd.

In Answer to which, it may be said, that the *Roman* Church has not determin'd, that the Belief of enough, is not sufficient, or that it is impossible for any Church to Unite with Her in Believing what is necessary to Salvation, that does not equally Profess and Practise all things that for the most part are received within Her Communion: Or that she cannot qualifie, or remit some of her Tenents, or Forms of Worship when she shall think fit to accommodate with any other Church.

When any *Roman Catholick* can shew that such particulars are not within the power of his Church to mitigate, or supersede, in order to Christian Tranquility, and the uniting of Souls, nay Kingdoms, by so Charitable and Famous a Concession; I will then grant all that is here urg'd to be as Fruitless or Insignificant, as any man is pleas'd to imagine. Nay, what is worse, that it lyes not in the Power of Christians to be as Wise, and Charitable as the common Dictates of Humanity would Imply.

Besides,



Besides, it is very apparent that the Decrees of Councils have not a little been misapprehended, if not farther enlarg'd than ever was intended by their Canons or Resolutions in matters strictly tending to Salvation. For Example, there are Many Decrees of Councils that affirm that such and such Doctrines shall not be deny'd, which is no more then a Negative manner of Confirming the Authority of their Church: But is there any one Decree of any Council that does Anathematize all Persons that do not outwardly Profess, and Practise all things that are contain'd within it's Decrees.

If there are Councils that have determined the conveniency of Praying to Saints and Worshipping of Images; Is there any of these Councils that do declare him to be damn'd, that does neither, or at least not directly in the same Sense and Words of Others.

Certainly there is no such Doctrine or Determination to be found, however pretended in order to keep Churches asunder, by such as are better pleas'd with needless Disputations then Religion or Conscience do oblige.

It cannot be deny'd, that the Church of *Rome* is strict in asserting her Decrees, and she could not have the Reputation of a Church, did she do otherwise; and to hold herself so far free from Error, is no other in effect then to assure the World, that she would not have Error laid to her Charge, or in bolder Terms have the Lie given her by way of Disputation. And thus it is very evident that there is a great difference betwixt the Latitude of an Ecclesiastical Determination, or allowance, and the necessity of enjoying an Universal Conformity in every Particular.

If the Churches of *Rome* and *England* should conclude of Doctrines sufficiently necessary for Publick Communion here, there is no *Roman-Catholic* or *Protestant* of this Church, but must concede, that the allowance of both

Churches, is an effectual Motive to produce their Charitable Accord, whereby they may be induc'd to perform their Devotions within the Walls of one Church. And were this duely dispos'd, I see no Reason why *Protestants* should not be as thankful to the *Pope*, and Church of *Rome*, as they would be to their own Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*, and his Convocation for an Expedient so pious and useful to the Service of God, their King and Country.

And least it be held Insignificant to propose a Reconciliation in general betwixt these Churches, without giving Example how this may be effected, as to things that require the most Accurate and Essential Decision, I will here, instead of other, touch Briefly the main yet undetermin'd difference, and which has hitherto continu'd, as I may say, the Heart of their Controversie, and that is the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the manner of receiving Christ thereby.

As to this Sacrament, the Church of *Rome* has defin'd the Body of Christ to be really present after Consecration; and this the Church of *England* seems after a manner, or rather by other Words to oppose, then totally to deny it, as shall soon appear.

The Church of *Rome* calls the Sacrament the *Body of Christ*, and the Church of *England* does so too, as it is to be seen in both their Liturgies. But the manner how our Lords Body is in the Eucharist, has as yet been the Dispute. Tho' more as it has been worded on both sides, than really different. For tho' *Roman Catholics* affirm that the Body of their Lord is in the Sacrament, they do not assert; nor is there any general Council, as I conceive, that has determin'd, whether the Body of Christ that was born of the Blessed Virgin, and now glorified in Heaven does remain under the *Species* of Bread in the Eucharist. But in Substance that the Sacrament does contain the Body and Blood of their Redeemer, without determining the utmost Ex-

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tent of the Miracle; or whether it were only his Natural Body, as it was once on Earth, or his Body that has now a more glorious being above.

But taking the word Body from the Literal Expression of the Scripture, have thought it sufficient from thence to Terminate their Belief of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

Neither has the Church of *Rome*, as was instanc'd before in the Doctrine of Praying to Saints, and Worshipping of Images, pronounc'd Damnation to any that should doubt of the certainty of her Tenent in this particular, tho' she has declar'd her *Anathema* against such as should deny the Validity of her Declaration. There being a vast difference betwixt the doubting of the sense of a Proposition of the Church, and a peremptory denial of its Truth. Since it is not possible for the Church to have assurance that every Individual Person within her Communion does not doubt of any one Article of Faith that she has propos'd.

So that all Fundamental Error, of this kind, must rather consist in a Positive Denial of what the Church has Averr'd to be Truth, than in being not able to understand the manner of her Proposal.

And if this Latitude be not granted to Men, the Antient Fathers of the Church, (whose opinions in many Doctrines are not without Hesitation or doubt,) must fall under very harsh Censures, as well as others that have reserv'd their private opinions within the compass of their Bosoms.

Nor can it be affirm'd (from what hath been mention'd before) that the Church of *England* does peremptorily deny the presence of Christs Body in the Sacrament, since in her own Words she does Communicate the Body of our Lord unto her Receivers. And has likewise declar'd it so to be believ'd, a necessary Doctrine; for what else does imply her Consecrating of the Body of Christ after a Spirit-

tnal manner. Neither is it less Stupendious, if rightly consider'd, to feed upon Christs Body in a Spiritual manner, according to the Expreſſion of the Church of *England*, than to receive him carnally into the mouth of the Communicant. Since either way muſt of neceſſity be more intelligible to Faith than Reaſon, as all things of Religion are whoſe Miraculous Truths fall not under the evidence of Humane Senſe and Demonſtration. What then remains ſo naturally to cloſe this Diſpute, as to grant on all hands that the Body of our Lord is given or contain'd in the Sacrament after a Super-natural manner? And if ſo, what can be ſo proper an Expedition to reconcile the Diſcuſſions of this Doctrin, as to concede that Men ought to allow the Miracle without Diſputing the manner how.

And if both Churches would come to this underſtanding in order to the uniting of their Judgements on the account of this Extraordinary Point of Controverſie, there is little doubt but other Matters, yet in Conteſt, would receive a ſoon Period.

If any man ask, why a Divine Reconcilement in things of Religion has not been made the Endeavour of former Princes, ſince in all the Revolutions, of that kind, that have emerg'd from the time of Reformation of Religion here, the very Nerves of the Government have been more or leſs chang'd or weaken'd thereby, in reſpect, that whereſoever Subjects are not united in Belief, the Regiment of Princes muſt needs be leſs abſolute or ſafe. To which, there can no answer be given, other than that Supream Magiſtrates have been more inclinable to depend upon their Decrees, and the Severity of their Laws, than by applying means of Spiritual Union, whereby their Subjects might be reduc'd not only to Eccleſiaſtical obedience, but likewiſe to joyn their Souls to the perſwaſion of their Prince where their opinions have been otherwiſe different.

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And this was unhappily the mistake of *Henry* the VIII. tho' perhaps discern'd by some of his Successors. For he, however Severe he was by Nature, could not be delighted to persecute at one time *Roman Catholics*, and whatsoever opinion besides that was different from what he call'd the Reformation establish'd by his Sovereign Decrees. A Crime too hainous to be imputed to any Christian King, or rather to be attributed to his not weighing considerably the Measures taken by his Will. Not apprehending, that wheresoever there are men divided in Worship, and in doing so, have likewise acknowledg'd several Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions, that it is impossible to Reconcile or Terminate the persuasions of such, unless by the common consent of the Divine Jurisdictions which they have own'd to be their Conduct in Spiritual Affairs and Government.

Thus, if the *Roman* and *English* Church should Endeavour an accommodation in Point of Jurisdiction and Doctrine, it must be produc'd by Persons properly delegated by their several Jurisdictions; and there is little doubt but an accord might be produc'd by this method, in respect, (as has been already Recited,) it would not be difficult to concenter in what were sufficient for both Churches to Remit, or Establish.

Nor can it be apprehended that any secular power would ever after attempt their separation, by Reason that no Supreme Civil Magistrate could be so imprudently influenc'd as to weaken the greatness and interest of his Rule by suffering his Subjects to return to their past Divisions by any consent from his Authority and Laws.

If the Church of *England* does claim Authentick Confirmation at this day both by Ecclesiastical and Parliamentary Determinations, it is no less certain that in the time of our Fore-fathers, (or not much longer ago than a Century of Years will amount to,) that *Roman Catholics* had as fully the outward face of Government on their side.

And

And can any man Judge it unreasonably mov'd, or attempted now, if their Reconciliation should be propos'd by the same means and power that formerly effected their Dis-union ? Certainly no, since it cannot but be thought a far less Novelty, and much a better Work, to establish a Christian Reconciliation, than to continue uncharitable Divisions.

And because some men suffer themselves to be inveig'l'd by the specious Discourses of Toleration in Point of Religion, (a Liberty I confess that may be in some sense indulg'd, where a better and surer method cannot be attain'd,) yet doubtless there is no man that can be so far mistaken as to conceive that there is any shadow of conveniency, redounding from the License of Toleration, to be compar'd, in the least degree, with the fix'd assurance and comfort of Spiritual concord.

And if there be any that will Judge otherwise, their Christianity must want some grains of Charity as well as Prudence : In respect that if such a License be once Establish'd, all means of uniting different Churches and Perswasions must totally vanish.

If Toleration of divided Faith be consider'd, as it respects God, whose Essence is one. It cannot be held in any Tolerable sense obliging, to Heaven. Neither can there be any assurance given how perniciously far, or absurdly, such may divide or separate, if Licens'd by Authority ; from all which is enough inferr'd the evil and dangerous consequence of Universal Toleration. And as to the Civil Magistrate the Enormities and Prejudices would be so great, that by allowing a Toleration he would by his own consent enfeeble his Scepter both on the Ecclesiastical and Civil Account. And what is worse, allow men to be more Erroneous or wicked, than in Prudence or Conscience he ought to concede.

If



If there were any hopes that such men would at any time inspect the unreasonableness of their Divisions, or be weary of being impertinent *Antagonists*, there were something to be said in behalf of Tolleration.

But Alas! the contrary would be soon discern'd; for They (instead of any Cessation or Reconcilement) would hold themselves oblig'd, or interested to continue their Animosities, by urging of Disputes, boasting of their daily Increase, Riches, and Power, in hope at last that some one of them may be paramount on all Accounts, and bend to their ends the Dominion they are under.

Whereas an accommodation betwixt Churches that have had Sovereign Authority, and Law Reciprocally, their defence, were a Christian Expedient not to be parallel'd,

If *English* Princes of the same Perswasion as the Church of *England* now professeth, did not foresee this Convenience, or thought it not their duty to compose this Work, or by Reason of some Circumstances or Emergencies in their times, held it not so safe or Beneficial to be set forward, as in this present Juncture may appear to discerning Judgments, and most particularly to the Royal prudence of the Religious and Famous King that now Swayes the *English* Scepter, in respect that his Perswasion is granted to be different from the Church he here Governs; Would any man, (of a due Christian Spirit and Allegiance,) not applaud his Piety and Magnanimity, above all his Predecessors, should he Endeavour to Incorporate his Faith with his Subjects, by Reconciling both Churches on such Terms as should reasonably require their common Union; whereby his People might have a more Conscientious regard and trust towards Him, as well as greater Christian confidence in one another: And by which means the Penalties and Rigour of Laws, that have in their Seasons irritated oppositions, and griev'd the Consciences of his People, might

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might be Abrogated by raising an Establish'd Reconciliation in their stead; and such a one as would prove too firm for future times to subvert, whilst Christianity and Kingly Government shall have joyn't interest in this Nation; because that in Conscience and Policy it would be too valuable a blessing to be infring'd by any subsequent change, as has been already explain'd. I say, he that would resent this Endeavour of his Sovereign, may as well take it ill, that his King is of a Pious and Charitable Inclination, or that he would invite his Subjects to embrace the most entire and peaceable methods of obedience by the dictates of Reason rather than by constraint.

And whosoever is otherwise affected, is not worth the trouble of a Dispute, or what has been made manifest by this short Essay, which does but instance in part, or rather awakens others in their proper spheres fully to compleat so Commodious and Pious an Undertaking.

F I N I S.

